



Becky Hale, Assistant Director, Strategy & Commissioning

Warwickshire County Council

beckyhale@warwickshire.gov.uk

Jon Reading, Head of Commissioning & Provision

Jon.reading@coventry.gov.uk

Coventry City Council

Re Care Home Visiting

3rd March 2021

Dear Care Home Manager,

We hope this finds you, your staff and your residents well.

We last wrote to you regarding care home visiting published on the 3rd December 2020. Since then, we have had a further national lockdown and from the 8th March 2021 we are moving into a new phase of pandemic management, as outlined by the Prime Minister on 22nd February 2021. One of the significant changes announced by the Prime Minister relates to care home visiting. Whilst we are aware that further specific national guidance will be published in the week beginning 1st March 2021, we wanted to summarise the national and local position, as it currently stands. This will be reviewed next week in line with further national guidance.

Please see the following press release, guidance document as well as the national road map (please see chapter 5 in particular):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/care-home-residents-to-be-allowed-one-visitor-as-part-of-cautious-easing-of-lockdown>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-lateral-flow-testing-of-visitors-in-care-homes/care-home-lfd-testing-of-visitors-guidance>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-spring-2021/covid-19-response-spring-2021#economic-and-social-support>

Coventry City Council, Warwickshire County Council and our NHS partners are committed to supporting our care home providers to be able to safely facilitate resident visiting in line with national guidance.

Key messages regarding care home visiting from 8th March 2021

Summary of information in Government plan COVID-19 RESPONSE – SPRING 2021 (*additional local guidance is in italic font*)

- From 8 March, every care home resident in England will be able to nominate a single named visitor who can come in for a regular visit. The visitor will have to take a rapid lateral flow test every time they visit, wear PPE (including gloves, apron and fluid resistant surgical mask (Type IIR) and keep physical contact to a minimum.
- In all cases visiting remains at the discretion of the Registered Manager of the care home.
- This single visitor may be someone who is delivering close-contact care. This will be restricted to visitors who provide assistance – such as help dressing, eating or washing – which is essential to the immediate health and wellbeing of a resident. *Please note that if the visitor is providing close contact care, they will need to adhere to full infection prevention and control measures as determined by care home management.*
- Providers should develop a dynamic risk assessment to help them decide how to provide visiting opportunities.
- CQC-registered care homes will continue to receive lateral flow test devices (LFD) to ensure they have sufficient quantities to test visitors appropriately.
- All staff undertaking testing must have completed the online NHS LFT testing training.
- Results are available quickly. The visitor will take the test on arrival and should await their result in a suitable (cleanable) COVID-19 secure waiting area.
- Anyone with a positive result will need to have a PCR test taken by the care home (and a priority courier organised for collection). *Should the latter not be practical, the visitor should return home immediately (not by public transport) and isolate with their household, and obtain a further confirmatory test via the usual NHS routes (nhs.uk/coronavirus, or through ringing 119). Note that following isolating as a confirmed positive COVID-19 case, visitors will not need to be tested again for 90 days unless they develop symptoms or have been otherwise exposed. Proof of their positive result would need to be brought to the home.*
- If a visitor has a negative test, is wearing appropriate PPE provided by the care home, and following other infection control measures it may be possible for visitors to have physical contact with their loved one (e.g. holding hands), although contact should be limited.
- Care providers need to consider the practicalities of implementing a visitor testing regime, have an up to date visiting policy in place, as required by national guidance and have in place relevant safeguards.
- *In exceptional circumstances, where a provider is not able to deliver a visiting testing programme in the home, visitors can attend a community rapid testing (lateral flow) site to be tested on the same day as their visit. They will need to bring proof of their negative result (and isolate between the test and coming into the home).*
- At Step 2 of the roadmap the Government will look carefully at the effectiveness of the vaccine for people living in care homes, as well as levels of infection in the local community, especially of any new variants. At this point, the Government will take a decision on extending the number of care home visitors to two per resident and set out a plan for the next phase of visits.

For visitors who have not been tested, as of 8th March we currently recommend that this takes place as follows. *Note that whilst awaiting further national guidance, we recommend that this should be limited to the single constant visitor plus one additional constant visitor:*

- Outdoor arrangements such as closed window, garden pods and socially distanced garden visits.
- Indoor visits where physical contact is avoided e.g. through floor to ceiling screens or visiting pods.
- Other indoor visits should continue to be allowed in exceptional circumstances such as end of life and for essential health and care professionals; with the necessary infection control precautions in place (including appropriate use of PPE).
- Visits should be booked in advance and not ad hoc.
- Face coverings (or PPE if visiting indoors) must be used throughout the visit, and around the care home building and grounds.
- In the event of an outbreak in a care home, the home should rapidly move to stop visiting (except in exceptional circumstances such as end of life, and essential health and care professionals) to protect vulnerable residents, staff and visitors. *If you are currently have an outbreak, please consult with the Infection Control and Public Health teams, to discuss when visiting can safely start.*
- Digital communications continue to be encouraged in situations where physical visiting is not feasible and to supplement face to face visits.
- Homes should support the NHS Test and Trace system by keeping a temporary record, including address and phone number, of current and previous residents, staff and visitors, as well as keeping track of visitor numbers and staff.

With regard to visits out of the care home setting, the current national lockdown guidance stands:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/arrangements-for-visiting-out-of-the-care-home/visits-out-of-care-homes>

Where there are positive cases within a care home a risk assessment will be undertaken or an Incident Management Team (IMT) meeting held involving the care home management, where we will make decisions as to the appropriateness of visiting continuing. This will be on a case by case basis as we recognise some flexibility will be required in different circumstances. In outbreak situations (2 or more linked cases), visiting is likely to need to cease completely, including for the single named visitors.

We recognise that the administration of testing to enable visiting places a significant extra staffing demand on care homes and additional funding is being made available through the Adult Social Care Rapid Testing Fund to support homes to do this.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-social-care-rapid-testing-fund/adult-social-care-rapid-testing-fund-guidance>

If you have any concerns regarding arrangements for your care homes please contact:

Coventry - SocialCareCommissioning@coventry.gov.uk

Warwickshire – peoplestrategyandcommissioning@warwickshire.gov.uk

Thank you once again for all the work that you are doing to help keep residents safe and supported and for facilitating contact with families under such difficult circumstances. We will write again with further detail when this becomes available.

Yours sincerely



Becky Hale

People, Strategy & Commissioning

Warwickshire County Council



Jon Reading

Head of Commissioning & Provision

Coventry City Council